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### Of Nutcrackers, Permanent Markers and Other Things – The Design Trio ding3000 permanent design



**By taking part in trade fairs and contests as well as through various publications, ding3000 has rapidly made a name for itself as one of Germany's most productive young design agencies.**

We might imagine things more or less as follows: in 2004, three young students Carsten Schelling, Ralf Webermann, and Sven Rudolph are at work on their diploma theses and are already dreaming about *afterwards*. About a joint design agency, earning money and whatever else might be connected with this. Naturally, they are also brooding about a name for their agency, because only when something has been given a name does it become relevant and significant. Typical for designers – a multitude of felt-tipped pens are lying about on the desk, among others those of the brand edding 3000 permanent marker. From here, it is only a short step to ding3000 permanent design. The name has been found, and it is to be permanent – up through the present.

#### Nomen est omen

This little story would amount to nothing more than a nice anecdote, if the name of the design agency did not reflect its programme as well – or more precisely – if the process of discovering its name did not reflect ding3000 permanent design's formative process as well. Many of their designs – mainly furnishings, accessories and lighting – are based on existing, familiar objects, which are then altered, modified or individualised. This is perhaps best illustrated by the three-part series *pimp my BILLY!* (2005), which livens up a well-known IKEA bestseller: the green shelf *BILLY Wilder*, with its ramifications that suggest tree branches, provides for wilder growth in the truest sense. In *BILLY Heidenreich* – named for Elke Heidenreich, a German author and former moderator of a literary broadcast in German television who is a passionate advocate of reading – the shelving consequently has a lectern built into it. And finally, the *Stütze* (i.e. support) tilts the entire bookcase slightly to one side, so that additional supports (book-ends) are no longer necessary.



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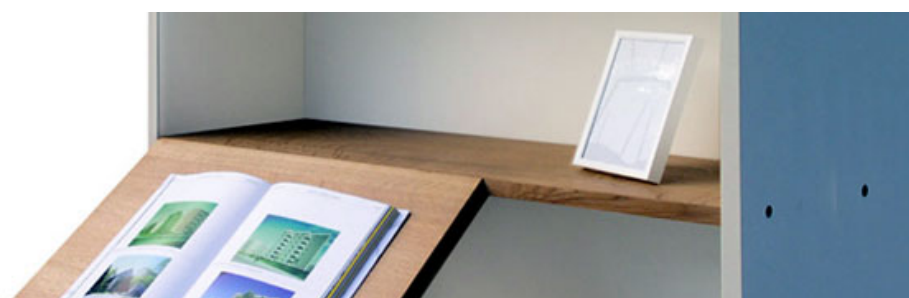
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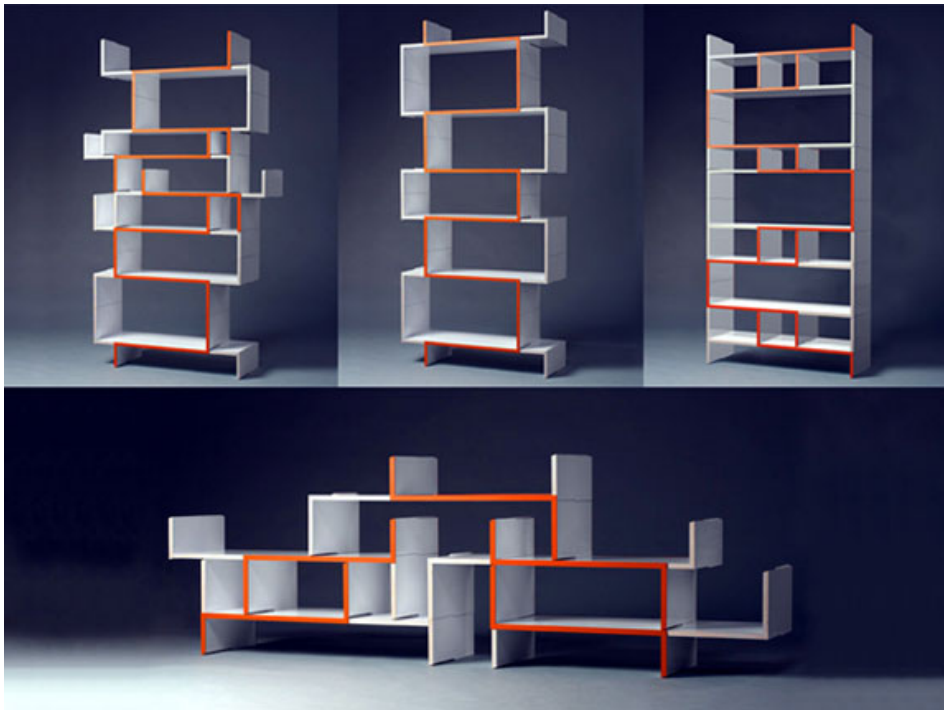
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Including the concept *Ding* (i.e. thing) in the agency's name could not remain without consequences for a design agency, even if due to chance in the end. Generally speaking, the idea of a "thing," unlike that of a product, always has something indefinite about it and at the same time suggests more information to come. We call an object a "thing," if we are unfamiliar with its proper name or it does not occur to us at the moment, and yet we also assign higher or ultimate "things" a certain sublimity. This might provide the linkage to the fact that many of the products designed by ding3000 end with the suffix *-ding*. Their *stuckleuchtding* (2005), for instance, is more – or at least something other – than just a lamp. And their *odersoding* (also from 2005) is not just a shelf, but thanks to its modular construction can also serve as a sideboard or room-divider.



#### **A fresh, questioning look at stale concepts**

Nonetheless, ding3000's things are at least always statements, that take a fresh, questioning look at stale product concepts – this is clearly so in the case of their *kerzenhalt ding* from 2004 – or by means of exaggeration fundamentally calling them into question and having fun doing so; an example here is *pvcfransending* (2006).

In the meantime, many of ding3000's design are being carried by Authentics, Konstantin Slawinski, Side By Side, Magazin, and Troika, and many have also been distinguished with prestigious awards in the course of recent years. Thus, most recently, the silicon cake form *s-xl cake* (2007), which can be shaped into cake forms in different sizes for large or small appetites, was honoured with the 2008 Design Plus Award, and nominated for the German Federal Design Award. The adjustable trivet *inandout* (2009) was given the Focus Open Silver 2009. The *Basketbin*, designed for Konstantin Slawinski, is a waste-paper basket and garbage pail in one that makes waste separation easier: moist and perishable garbage is put in a



small, separate container.



#### A nutcracker thing

Even the trio's very first product, the nutcracker *RAY!* – strictly speaking, a design by Ralf Webermann developed during his studies and before the actual founding of ding3000 – was honoured in 2001 by the first Troika Junior Design Award, and instantly became both a best- and long-seller. To date, *RAY!* and its successor *CHARLES* (2009) have been sold approx. 85,000 times, a quantity that is more than impressive.

By the way - *RAY!* cracks nuts with the aid of an air-filled balloon, in a way that prevents a nuisance we are all familiar with from happening in the first place: the shell and its contents are cleanly separated from each other, and the kernel remains entirely unharmed. In this sense, *RAY!* is much more than a nutcracker, in fact, it is more like a... nutcracker thing...



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